

Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SCA-01 VO-03 H-01 EB-08
COME-00 CU-02 L-03 NSC-05 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07
NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00 FRB-03 TRSE-00 SP-02 /077 R

DRAFTED BY EUR/SOV:MTDIXON:DKM
APPROVED BY EUR/SOV:MGARRISON
EUR/SOV:WHEDGAR
EUR/RPE:DSWARTZ (SUBS)
SCA/VO:WRYERSON (INFO)
EUR/RPM:JMADDEN
-----220306Z 032436 /75-70

P 220014Z MAR 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BTRA, CVIS, EAIR, ETRD, CSCE, UR

SUBJECT: MOSCOW 2851

1. IN VIEW OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SOVIET VISA PRACTICES OUTLINED REFTTEL, EMBASSY SHOULD RAISE MATTER ORALLY
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AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL IN MFA.

2. EMBASSY COULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS: USG IS CONCERNED ABOUT NEW VISA PROBLEMS FACED BY AN INCREASING NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES OF US COMMERCIAL FIRMS STATIONED IN THE SOVIET UNION.

RECENTLY-INITIATED SOVIET PROCEDURES PLACE NEW LIMITATIONS ON EXIT/RE-ENTRY VISAS AND CREATE DIFFICULTIES FOR THOSE BUSINESSMEN WHO MUST DEPART THE USSR ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS. FOR EXAMPLE, REPRESENTATIVES OF US FIRMS HAVE BEEN RECEIVING EXIT/RE-ENTRY VISAS REQUIRING THE BEARER TO EXIT BY A FIXED DATE, PRIOR TO THE DATE ON WHICH THE VISA EXPIRES, THUS ABBREVIATING THE VALIDITY OF THE VISA. AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ARE BEING REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR AN EXIT VISA AT LEAST THREE WORKING DAYS IN

ADVANCE. A PARTICULARLY ONEROUS INNOVATION HAS BEEN THE REQUIREMENT THAT BUSINESSMEN DECLARE THE EXACT POINT OUTSIDE THE USSR TO WHICH THEY INTEND TO TRAVEL. THIS HAS RESULTED IN DELAYED DEPARTURES FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD TO MAKE LAST MINUTE CHANGES IN THEIR TRAVEL PLANS.

THE FINAL ACT OF THE CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE SPECIFIES THAT PARTICIPATING STATES ARE TO FACILITATE PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL OF THEIR CITIZENS BY SIMPLIFYING AND FLEXIBLY ADMINISTERING PROCEDURES FOR EXIT AND ENTRY. FURTHER, THE SECTION ON "COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES" CALLS FOR THE SIGNATORIES TO TAKE "MEASURES... TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR THE EXPANSION OF CONTACT" AND "MEASURES AIMED AT IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS." THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE SOVIET UNION HAS CHOSEN TO IMPOSE THESE NEW RESTRICTIONS ON VISAS FOR COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVES IN VIEW OF THE FINAL ACT COMMITMENTS.

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THE UNITED STATES HAS ATTEMPTED TO FACILITATE TRAVEL TO AND WITHIN THE UNITED STATES OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVES IN VARIOUS WAYS, INCLUDING: THE ISSUANCE WITHOUT DELAY OF VISAS TO OFFICIALS PERMANENTLY ASSIGNED TO THE USSR TRADE REPRESENTATION IN THE US; THE FREQUENT WAIVING OF US REGULATIONS WHICH REQUIRE SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS TO APPLY FOR VISAS AT LEAST THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE DATE OF THEIR INTENDED DEPARTURE FOR THE UNITED STATES; AND A PROPOSAL UNDER WHICH ALL PERMANENT US AND SOVIET COMMERCIAL PERSONNEL WOULD RECEIVE MULTIPLE ENTRY/EXIT VISAS ON A RECIPROCAL BASIS. THIS US PROPOSAL IS ONE OF LONG-STANDING AND HAS BEEN SUBMITTED IN VARIOUS FORUMS, BUT THE USSR HAS CHOSEN NOT TO RESPOND.

WE HOPE THAT THE USSR WILL EXAMINE THIS MATTER AND ACT EXPEDITIOUSLY NOT ONLY TO REMOVE THE RESTRICTIONS IT HAS RECENTLY IMPOSED, BUT ALSO TO GIVE SERIOUS

CONSIDERATION TO THE US PROPOSAL FOR A LIBERALIZATION
OF VISA PROCEDURES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, BUSINESSMEN, VISAS, VISA REGULATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE062931
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MTDIXON:DKM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770097-0133
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770334/aaaabdqs.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2fe234b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3033935
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MOSCOW 2851
TAGS: BTRA, CVIS, EAIR, ETRD, UR, US, CSCE
To: MOSCOW
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2fe234b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009